TRACKS 2006 ATLANTA, GA
Implementing The Tracking Network

breakout ABSTRACT

Abstract No. 21

TITLE

DEVELOPING AN ENVIRONMENTAL PUBLIC HEALTH TRACKING MODULE FOR AMYOTROPHIC LATERAL SCLEROSIS: IMPLICATIONS OF WISCONSIN'S ALS MORTALITY EXPERIENCE

TRACK

Network Content

OBJECTIVES

After this presentation, audience members should be able to describe the most common codes employed for describing deaths from amyotrophic lateral sclerosis and elaborate on the benefits of increased recording of geographical address with a range of health outcomes for ALS, MS and other neurodegenerative diseases for which viable environmental hypotheses continue to be generated.

SUMMARY

Wisconsin's Environmental Public Health Tracking (EPHT) program has undertaken a demonstration project to enhance surveillance efforts for amyotrophic lateral sclerosis (ALS) and multiple sclerosis (MS) and create a platform for generating and testing environmental hypotheses about ALS etiology by linking case information with statewide environmental hazard data. To this end, mortality data from Wisconsin's vital records system for 1989 through 1998 were extracted and analyzed in order to summarize how deaths were classified and to determine the degree to which geographically-specific estimates of environmental hazards can be considered representative of decedent exposure. A total of 1047 deaths were identified in Wisconsin for which ALS was derived as underlying cause of death (UCOD) or a listed as a primary cause of death. ALS was listed as the UCOD in 508 deaths (48.5%). In cases where ALS was not specified as the UCOD, respiratory arrest, pneumonia and death due to inhalation of food or vomitus were most commonly reported as the UCOD. Among the 658 deaths reported as occurring outside an inpatient facility, 280 (42.6%) were classified as occurring in nursing homes. From these observations, it is clear that residential history information beyond what is available from state vital records is sorely required to adequately consider environmental hypotheses about the incidence of ALS. As such, successful investigations of the role of environmental hazards in ALS incidence would be greatly aided by patient- and decedent-level information about residential history, and adds to the impetus to develop national and international ALS registries.

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